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ABSTRACT

Developed particularly for vocational educators, guidance and counseling personnel, and directors of gifted education programs, this booklet (brochure) is intended to bring about a greater awareness of the occupational opportunities for gifted and talented students through vocational education. Initial discussion focuses on definition and need for synthesis of the following concepts: equal opportunity, guidance and counseling, special education, career education, gifted education, and vocational education. Some characteristics of gifted and talented students and their identification are discussed briefly. The remainder of the booklet is an overview of the possible vocational programs and potentially satisfying jobs for the gifted/talented. Final emphasis is on the importance of guidance and counseling for the gifted. Photographs illustrate the text. (JT)

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GIFTED AND THE TALENTED STUDENTS

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Utilizing the energies of America's most valuable natural resource -- the gifted and the talented students -- through satisfying vocational occupations

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GIFTED AND THE TALENTED STUDENTS

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Vermillion, 57069

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FOREWORD

The publication has been developed for educators - - particularly vocational educators, guidance and counseling personnel and directors of gifted education programs - - to bring about a greater awareness of the occupational opportunities for gifted and talented students through Vocational Education. Many potentially satisfying kinds of work and exciting occupational choices are open to the gifted and talented student through vocational as well as professional preparation. In this brief document, it is hoped that educators will see the merit in making a concerted effort to allow the gifted students the option of exploring the alternatives available in vocational preparation as they search for a life-satisfying career in keeping with their interests and abilities. There is a marked need for vocational educators and counselors to work together to bridge the gap between the gifted/talented and students traditionally enrolled in vocational programs. This booklet calls to the attention of secondary and post secondary personnel the need for cooperation in recruiting and enrolling the gifted and talented in appropriate vocational programs.

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Vocational Education has traditionally been seen as a less prestigious alternative for fulfilling the educational needs of the more capable students than are the professional pathways open to them through the baccalaureate degree.

As we look at the immediate and long range consequences of this type of thinking, we find that the overemphasis upon the professional areas has left industry and business critically short of skilled personnel. Vocational education must attract the superior students into its programs if this shortage is to be filled.

The gifted and talented child has long puzzled educators. Many assume that these students are capable of making it on their own without direction and, as a matter of course, will find a satisfying outlet for their talent in the world of work. In truth, the gifted child needs more guidance and special programming than do most students.

Guidance and counseling in our public schools has been lacking as a positive force in Vocational Education. It has failed to provide gifted and talented students with a comprehensive view of the many potentially satisfying occupations open to them in the vocational fields. Counselors, for the most part, are not informed as to the variety of occupations open to students.

THE DILEMMA.....

Business, industry, agriculture and particularly many of the highly technical fields of America's productive enterprises are demanding that the schools produce students with superior abilities at an earlier level. The delay, caused by gifted students spending long periods of time in non-enriching, non-rewarding and non-relevant programs, has deprived America's work and productive forces of the best minds, creative talents, and leadership abilities in the gifted's most productive years.

A vast majority of the nation's gifted and talented youth go through out schools without being identified and programmed. Both the students and the nation are being divested of the rewards which should be derived from their potention contributions to self and society.

One of history's clearest lessons is that problems cannot be solved on a smaller scale than that on which they arise.--- Harry Wheeler

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

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GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

" . . . through individual and group contacts over a period of time the counselor has a major role in helping all persons develop a more adequate and realistic concept of themselves, become aware of educational and occupational opportunities and to integrate their understanding of self and opportunities in making informed decisions . . . " (ASCA's position statement, 1974)

SPECIAL EDUCATION

"A child who, because of temporary or more permanent adjustment difficulties or attributes arising from intellectual, sensory, emotional or physical factors, cerebral dysfunctions, perceptual factors, or other specific learning disabilities, or any combination thereof, is unable to progress effectively in a regular education program is an exceptional child, or a child with special needs." (Council for Exceptional Children, 1972)

CAREER EDUCATION

"Career education is needed by and intended for all people . . . . It is a lifelong process which extends from early childhood through adulthood . . . based upon the premise that all honest work and purposeful study is respectable . . . provides the means by which the educational system can focus on career development . . . provides a unifying core for the total educational enterprise with intensive occupational preparation as a significant aspect . . . it will be necessary to utilize the common and unique contributions to all educators and the resources of home, school and community . . . ."
(American Vocational Association, 1972)

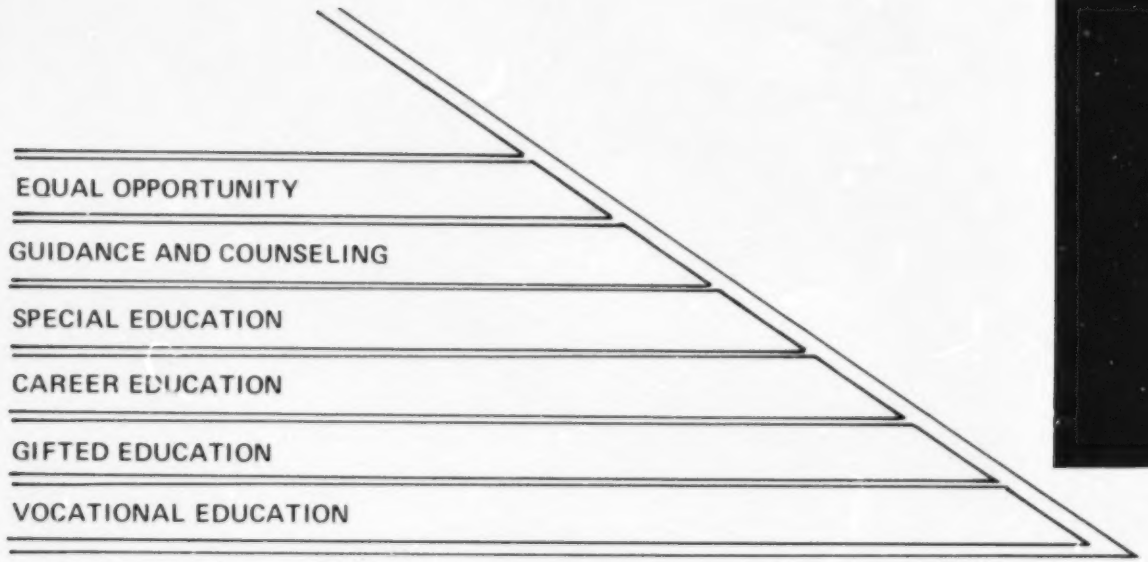
GIFTED EDUCATION

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons, who by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society. (Marland, S.P., Education of the Gifted and Talented: Report to the Congress of the United States by the U.S. Commissioner of Education, 1971.)

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational or technical training or retraining which is given in schools or classes (including field or laboratory work and remedial or related academic and technical instruction incident thereto) under public supervision and control or under contract with a state board or local education agency, and is conducted as part of a program designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as semiskilled or skilled workers or technicians or sub-professionals in recognized occupations and in new and emerging occupations, or to prepare individuals for enrollment in advanced technical education programs, but excluding any program to prepare individuals for employment in occupations generally considered professional or which requires a baccalaureate or higher degree. (American Vocational Association, Washington, D.C., 1971)

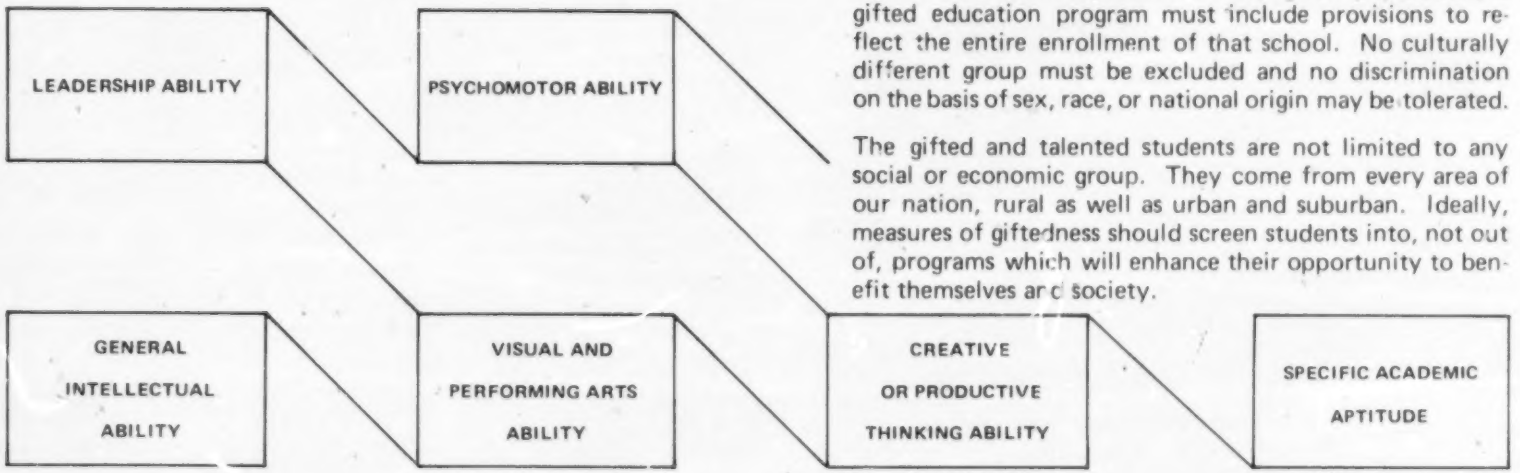
A NEED FOR SYNTHESIS.....



There is a need for synthesis of existing educational movements. All of the different programs, such as Guidance and Counseling, Special Education, Career Education, Gifted Education and Vocational Education, which gained impetus as a result of recent legislation, have created a real dilemma in the education of the individual.

We cannot afford to bring about another movement - - Vocational preparation for the Gifted and Talented Students. What is needed is an emphasis on the synthesis of existing programs and on individualizing instruction beyond that which is given in the regular school program. . . .Never before has attention to the individual . . . as a person . . . been so imperative.

IDENTIFYING THE GIFTED.....



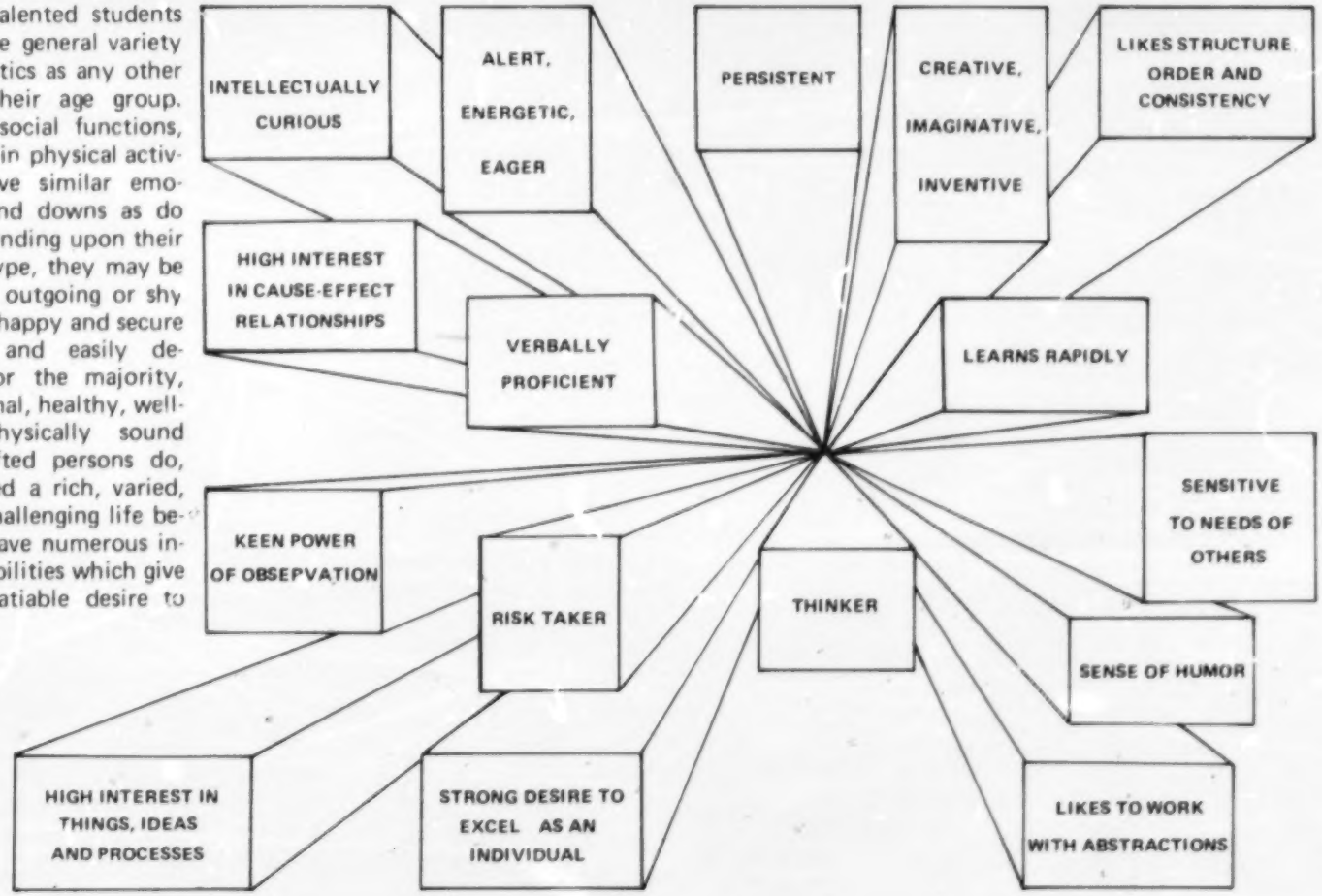
In working with the gifted in Vocational Education, as in any phase of gifted and talented education, identification and screening of the target population is crucial. Currently, educators working with gifted programs are emphasizing the need for broad area definitions of giftedness; and that identification be conducted through experiences as well as through screening devices such as intellectual, aptitude and ability tests. Academic and intellectual screening, used widely in the 60's following the Sputnik scare, left out many underachieving and culturally different gifted/talented students.

General intellectual ability and specific academic aptitude are still considered vital measures of giftedness. However, of equal importance are measures of creative or productive thinking ability, leadership ability, ability in the visual and performing arts and psychomotor ability. Although the number of gifted and talented students is considered to be from three to five percent of any given population, a gifted education program must include provisions to reflect the entire enrollment of that school. No culturally different group must be excluded and no discrimination on the basis of sex, race, or national origin may be tolerated.

The gifted and talented students are not limited to any social or economic group. They come from every area of our nation, rural as well as urban and suburban. Ideally, measures of giftedness should screen students into, not out of, programs which will enhance their opportunity to benefit themselves and society.

SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

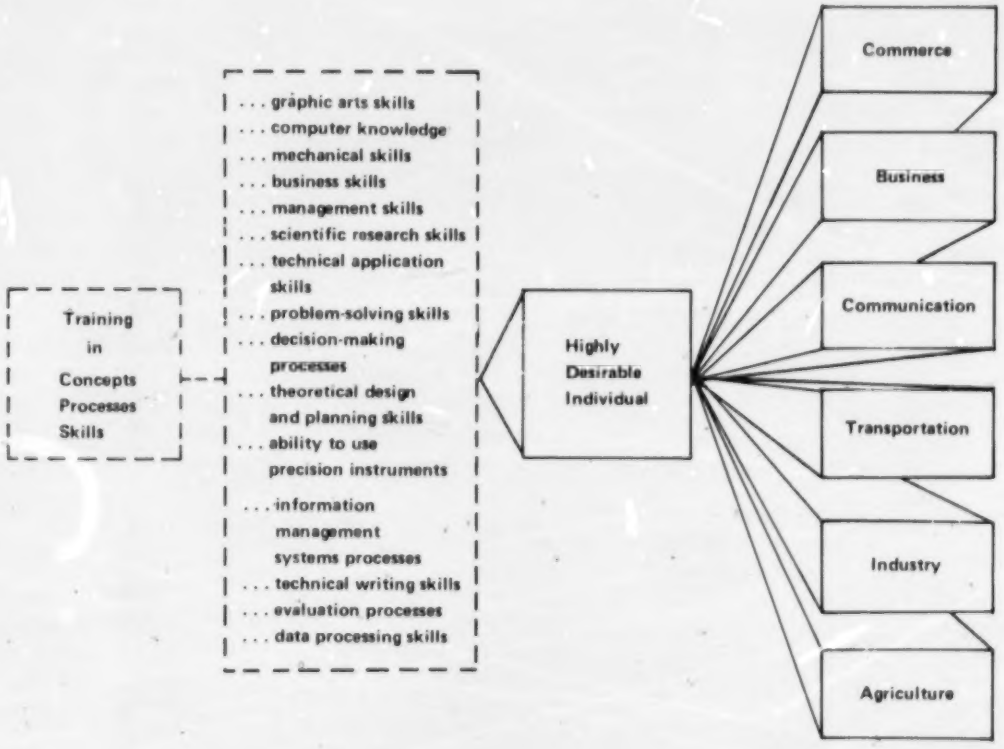
Gifted and talented students have the same general variety of characteristics as any other student in their age group. They enjoy social functions, participation in physical activities and have similar emotional ups and downs as do others. Depending upon their personality type, they may be friendly and outgoing or shy and retiring; happy and secure or anxious and easily depressed. For the majority, they are normal, healthy, well-balanced, physically sound people. Gifted persons do, however, need a rich, varied, active and challenging life because they have numerous interests and abilities which give them an insatiable desire to learn.

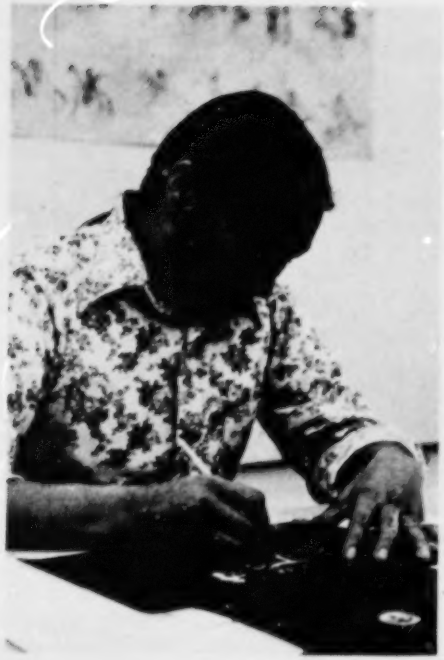


VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS DESIGNED FOR THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

Generally speaking, the higher the degree of giftedness or level of talent, the more difficult it is for the student to decide on a life's occupation. It is therefore essential that vocational educators be aware of the need to provide a wide range of work experiences in and among the occupational clusters. Types of work which utilize the gifted student's creative/productive ability, leadership ability, management skill and psychomotor ability require more suitable programming guides than preparation for a specific job or classified position. Experiences which capitalize on divergent thinking and problem solving techniques allow the gifted an opportunity to put his/her talented energies toward self-designed, individualized programs. By providing opportunities for work experiences beyond those given in the regular instruction program, the vocational educator will open doors to a wealth of occupational alternatives. In addition to wise utilization of available facilities, one of the vocational teacher's roles must be that of enlisting help from other staff members and community resource persons who can enhance the gifted's preparatory program.

Training in concepts, processes and skills plus work experiences utilizing acquired skills produce a highly desirable individual capable of finding life-satisfying work in many different occupational clusters.


Training in Concepts Processes Skills
. . . graphic arts skills
. . . computer knowledge
. . . mechanical skills
. . . business skills
. . . management skills
. . . scientific research skills
. . . technical application skills
. . . problem-solving skills
. . . decision-making processes
. . . theoretical design and planning skills
. . . ability to use precision instruments
. . . information management systems processes
. . . technical writing skills
. . . evaluation processes
. . . data processing skills
Highly Desirable Individual
Commerce
Business
Communication
Transportation
Industry
Agriculture



Regardless of the type of preparation program or the occupational cluster in which the student chooses to study, the vocational educator must provide for an individualized program of learning. Considerable evidence indicates that the educator must make allowances for the unique characteristics of the gifted and talented student. For example, in working with the more creative and productive thinkers, the instructor must allow **time** and **freedom** for four sequential stages in the creative process:

- **PREPARATION:** problem identification and fact gathering
- **INCUBATION:** time to think about the problem, associating the new with the old information
- **ILLUMINATION:** sudden creation of an idea, concept or solution to the problem
- **VERIFICATION:** testing the idea to see if it works

Any program for the Vocational Preparation of Gifted and Talented Students must allow for three important ingredients --

INDIVIDUALIZATION -- A program unique to the student's needs, abilities, and aspirations.

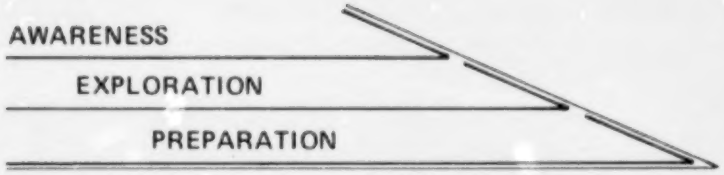
TIME -- Long uninterrupted periods in the laboratories, shops or resource centers for thinking, planning, research and testing.

FREEDOM -- The absence of forces which restrict the fulfilling of the creative process.

From the gifted children of today will be drawn the artists, musicians, writers, scientists, doctors, politicians, industrialist, educators, lawyers and craftsmen of tomorrow--

Unknown

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE GIFTED IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION.....



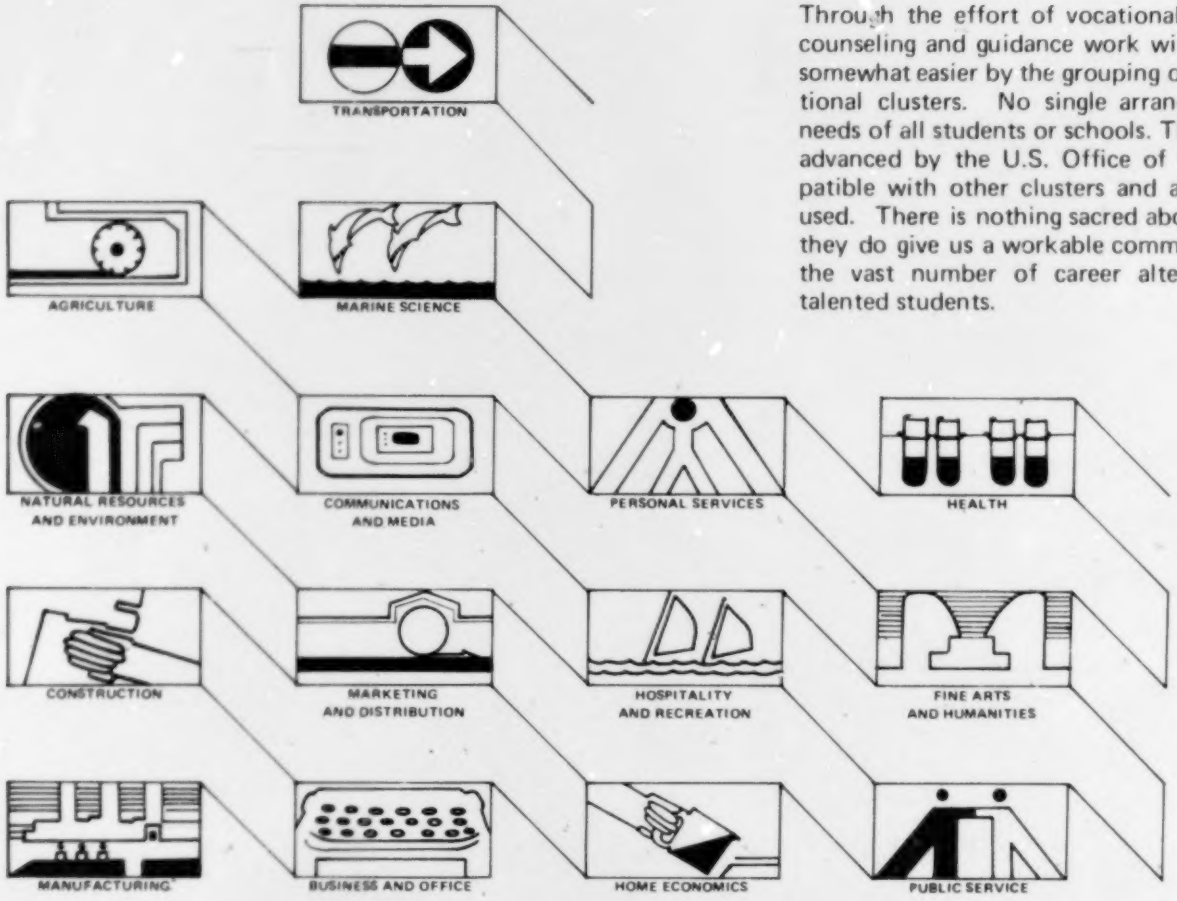
"It is the first of all problems for a man to find out what kind of work he is to do in this universe." Carlyle.

Demands by the students, parents and adult population for real work experience and job responsibility have caused vocational educators to develop a three phase program for entry into the world of work - - AWARENESS phases (grades 7 & 8), EXPLORATION phase (grades 9 & 10), and PREPARATION phase (grades 11 thru 14). By utilizing home, school and community resources, vocational education has been successful in providing experiences in all areas for those students who enter the program. Unfortunately, many students, particularly the gifted and talented, are programmed out of vocational education and channeled into solely academic and/or college preparatory courses. The resulting effect is that the majority of the public school students have little or no opportunity to participate in the three phase vocational program.

Our educational system must be for all youth. It is clearly evident that in addition to providing an academic education which will give us a highly literate society, we must also prepare gifted students to be active, participating and productive members within our nation and the world. It is no longer a question of choosing between academic and vocational education. Our schools must enable all students to enter and compete in a modern technological society - - and have the freedom and wisdom to live in it.

Choosing a vocation is more difficult for today's generation of youth than it has been at any other time. There are many hundreds, even thousands, of different jobs and careers to choose from, and youth need guidance in selecting a career. Additionally, there is the concern for choosing between a college bound curriculum and a vocational preparatory program early in their educational program.

THE GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENT LOOKS AT THE OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS



Through the effort of vocational and occupational educators, counseling and guidance work with the students has been made somewhat easier by the grouping of jobs into families or occupational clusters. No single arrangement of clusters meets the needs of all students or schools. The "15 Occupational Clusters" advanced by the U.S. Office of Education appear to be compatible with other clusters and are probably the most widely used. There is nothing sacred about the USOE 15 Clusters, but they do give us a workable communication format for handling the vast number of career alternatives open to gifted and talented students.

POTENTIALLY SATISFYING JOBS FOR THE GIFTED IN THE OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS.....

Two dominating myths overshadow effective recruitment of gifted and talented students into vocational education programs:

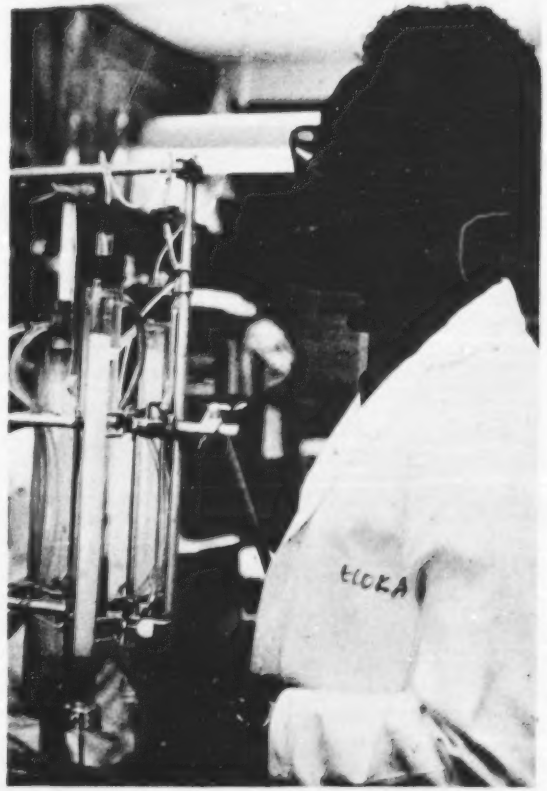
- - because they are gifted they must go to college and get a degree in order to fulfill their potential
- - vocational programs are for the average or less capable students

Ironically, it is the educator in the "comprehensive" secondary school who perpetuates these prestige/success myths.

Fortunately, there are many educators and parents who are aware of the advancements in business, industry, agriculture, commerce, transportation, and communication. Through them, more and more demands are being made upon the schools to provide educational programs which give all students an opportunity to gain a saleable skill upon completing high school or an extended two-year program. The college or university is rapidly becoming an option, rather than the only choice a student, gifted or not, has in our secondary schools.

By the very nature of some of the types of work within each of the occupational clusters, it is apparent that preparation programs for such work can only be mastered by students with outstanding abilities. It behooves educators to become more informed about the potentially satisfying life-careers available through vocational preparation and the career alternatives open to the gifted students upon completion of such preparation.

I cannot learn to
decide...
If you make my
decisions.
I cannot learn to
be myself...
If you tell me
what to be.
Let me choose what
I must learn.
unknown



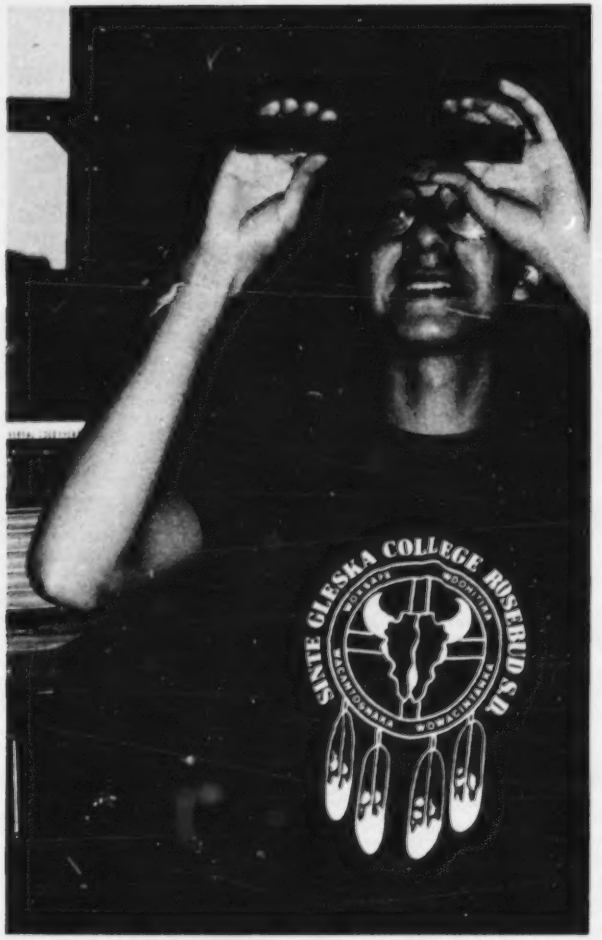
Success in any occupation demands skill and accuracy.

Job satisfaction is best attained by blending one's interest, talents and training.

Gifted and talented persons will find their opportunities limited only by their aspirations.

Dignifying work is a preface to success.

Dedication is an integral part of leadership.



Success is enriched by a commitment to serve humanity.

THE ANSWER LIES IN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING FOR THE GIFTED.....

THE COUNSELOR AND THE STAFF

Although much of the burden for identification, guidance and counseling of the gifted and the talented student rests within the pupil personnel divisions in the schools, eventually, all educational personnel must play a positive role in counseling. The Guidance and Counseling team can and must take the leadership in working with the classroom teachers, administrators, vocational/career educators and the adults of the community. Through careful planning and in-service training the school staff can make meaningful contributions to the gifted youth as they explore the vocational opportunities in search of potentially satisfying jobs. All must be aware of the unique needs of the gifted and talented students and make a concerted effort to help them realize their contribution to self and society.

THE COUNSELOR AND THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATOR

The counselor must also work with the vocational educators in directing the gifted student's awareness, exploration and preparation activities. In addition to providing information on career opportunities and potential outlets for the student's interests and talents within the occupational clusters, the counselor must be seen as the one constant link in the student's program. Through this linkage the counselor can guide and direct, not only the student, but the parents and school staff in such an orchestrated manner that the gifted and talented youth can fulfill his/her hopes and dreams for a differentiated educational program.

THE COUNSELOR AND THE EDUCATORS OF THE GIFTED . . .

Guidance and counseling must initially work with the educators of the gifted in the identification process. By utilizing screening and identification techniques such as testing and interviews, the counselor can provide information on the intellectual characteristics, diversity of areas of interests, rates and modes of learning, and insight into the career aspirations and occupational goals of the gifted and talented student. In order to do this effectively, the counselor must be aware of the personal, social and leisure needs of the individual as well as the need for a productive and self-fulfilling career.

THE COUNSELOR AND THE GIFTED STUDENT

Ultimately, the counselor must fulfill his role as a professional - - helping the gifted and talented student to develop a more adequate and realistic individual self concept. The counselor must consider the feelings, anxieties, and pressures, all affective concerns, as well as cognitive and skill development whether in the academic or vocational program. Self-awareness, self-esteem and a positive self-image are critical needs for all students. Experience has shown that the gifted and talented students need more guidance, counseling and encouragement than most other students. Teaching the student to live with his/her gifts and talents as a whole person is the most valuable lesson that can be taught. This, too must be an integral part of the guidance and counseling charge.

A recent writer indicates that certain rules of the vocational counseling task should be established for the gifted:

1. It is their life and their own decision.
2. The choices are not limited to ones they know about. To present a complete picture, we should put into the hopper all the others for which they can be qualified and in which they might be interested if they only knew about them.
3. The gifted are generally good at analyzing themselves; so their own analysis is important.
4. Counseling, information and experiences of the early years will help make decisions later on.

THE CHALLENGE.....

Every gifted and talented student should be given the right to examine the alternative career and occupational choices open to him/her through vocational education. Whether by design or default, our schools and educational system have not provided adequate opportunities for them to fulfill this right. The majority of our work and productive forces in all occupations will be filled with the students now in our public and private schools. We, the educational decision-makers of today, must determine the priorities and where we place our time, resources and energy. Let us not squander away the greatest natural resource - - our youth - - particularly the gifted and the talented.

TO CHANGE

The decision-makers - - parents, educators, legislators, leaders in business and industry, and the students themselves - - must make a commitment to do something about the future of work in our nation and the world. No change can occur without action, and no action can occur without commitment. If the gifted and talented students are to realize their contributions to self and society, the decision-makers of today have to care enough to do something tangible - - to express that commitment through positive action. To initiate a plan of action which would recruit and include gifted and talented students in our secondary and post secondary vocational education program would be a tangible action.

And do something for the gifted and the talented
in our time... for the future... through vocational education